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Editorial

Arroyo regime's 10-point program is worthless and deceptive



Gloria Arroyo's much-vaunted 10-point program is nothing but a grand deception. Its objective is none other than to hoodwink the people and cover up the regime's inutility to uphold the interests of the greater number. It brings intensifying exploitation and oppression to the people in the hands of plundering foreign and local capitalists, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists. It will bring nothing but further suffering and repression.

Aside from its loftier and even more incredible promises, Arroyo's 10-point program bears no difference from the empty pledges she made in her state of the nation address in July 2003. With none of the old promises fulfilled, we certainly can expect nothing from her new declarations.

The large-scale destruction of productive forces and the collapse of production go on unabated. The budget deficit is expected to reach ₱200 billion. The trade deficit and the government's gargantuan indebtedness as well as the Philippines' external debt continue to mount. Arroyo simply does not have the wherewithal to meet her targets.

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Even bourgeois economists are disparaging of Arroyo's 10-point program, saying that it is too ambitious and its targets not grounded on reality. They take into consideration the fact that the economy is prostrate and saddled with a myriad problems. Arroyo's exceedingly lofty targets are actually an indication of her extreme desperation to deceive the people.

One of Arroyo's promises is to create six to 10 million jobs. If she failed to deliver on her previous promise of creating one million new jobs, what can we expect now, when as before, there are no plans to put an end to pro-imperialist policies that have caused local production to plummet and resulted in widespread unemployment nationwide? Whatever jobs generated will merely be contractual and last from three to five months in a year, or will be in the form of non-substantial work provided by government such as sweeping streets.

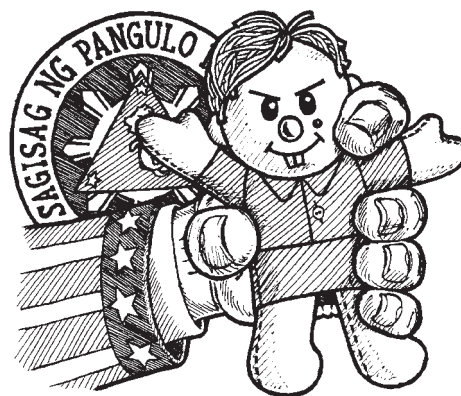
Despite the steep rise in daily expenses, the Arroyo regime has adamantly refused to increase workers' wages. It turns a blind eye and is silent in the face of successive increases in the price of gasoline, electricity, water and expressway costs.

Worse, it even plans to impose more taxes on top of the extremely onerous burden already being shouldered by the toiling masses.

Its much-vaunted progress in agriculture is inconsequential. No development can be realized in the countryside if genuine agrarian reform is not implemented, and the monopoly power of old and new type landlords is instead strengthened.

Neoliberalization in agriculture, which Arroyo promotes, condemns the countryside to even more backwardness and poverty. The large-scale dumping of foreign agricultural products and expensive imported implements such as seedlings, fertilizer and pesticides, among others is killing local production and resulting in bankruptcy among farmers. No progress can be attained in the countryside other than that which benefits gigantic foreign monopoly agribusiness corporations and landlords.

No one buys Arroyo's claims of a "balanced national budget." Where will she get the funds? With the enormous budget deficit, it is the people who will surely be bled dry with all the additional taxes that will be imposed and the cutbacks on social



services. To qualify for new loans, the regime will be doing a lot more begging on its knees with the IMF. And where will all the loans end up? Where else but in growing military expenditures and in servicing government indebtedness and the country's external debt. Where else but to line the pockets of corrupt government officials?

And what about Arroyo's statement regarding the "just conclusion of the peace process"? The government has shown in previous negotiations in Oslo, Norway, that it is not really serious about attaining peace. The Arroyo regime engages in negotiations with no other objective in mind but to deceive, pressure, and cause the surrender of the revolutionary movement. It vacillates when it comes to implementing agreements even as it remains intransigent on many other more important points.

There can be no peace without the resolution of the issues that lie at the roots of the civil war and for as long as Arroyo continues to intensify the "anti-terrorist war" and refuses to seriously confront the social and economic issues behind the raging people's war. If Arroyo's insists on being obstinate, the peace negotiations can never attain significant advances.

Even as the US-Arroyo regime refuses to squarely address the roots of the civil war, it continues to make overtures to its reactionary political rivals. It claims that it wishes to "close the book" on the people's uprising that brought down the de-



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spised Marcos and Estrada regimes in 1986 and 2001, respectively, but not towards the attainment of justice for the people and meting out punishment to those who have committed crimes against them. By coming to an arrangement with the Marcoses and the Estradas and offering bribes to its political rivals, the regime further fuels the people widespread loathing for the brazen electoral fraud perpetrated by Arroyo in the recent polls.

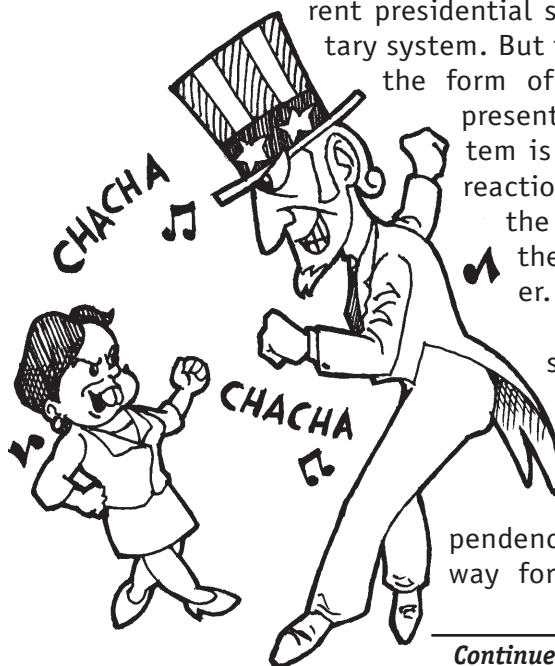
By implementing policies that repress the people and kowtow to US imperialism, the Arroyo regime drives the Filipino people to unite and put an end to its rule. However much the Arroyo regime wants to "close the book on the EDSA uprising," it will certainly face both a new uprising as well as the further advance of the revolutionary armed struggle waged by a people already suffering to the hilt and full of anger for the rotten reactionary system. The worsening crisis of the ruling system stresses the need for revolutionary struggle to fight for the people's national and democratic interests. Only the program for national-democratic change advanced by the Communist Party and revolutionary and progressive forces can resolve the biggest problems of the Filipino people.

AB

Charter change is a US agenda

The proposed "chacha" (charter change) is one of US imperialism's most urgent agenda in the Philippines. Thus, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her closest supporters are now hastily trying to unify reactionary politicians around this plan. Arroyo is wasting no time in pushing this scheme because of all the reactionary politicians, it is she who stands to benefit the most from it.

The issue accorded the most publicity in plans to amend the constitution is changing the form of government from the current presidential system to the parliamentary system. But the question of changing the form of government under the present political and social system is meaningful only for the reactionaries. It only resolves the issue of how to effect the orderly sharing of power.



The more important issue in "chacha" actually involves plans to do away with the declared principle of national patrimony and independence in order to pave the way for the complete domina-

Continued on "Charter..." on page 4

Third round of peace negotiations, disappointing—JMS

"Disappointing!" This was how NDFP negotiating panel senior political adviser Jose Maria Sison described the third round of formal talks held in Oslo, Norway on June 22-25. The two sides agreed on some important matters but the GRP peace panel refused to issue a joint statement. Based on the conduct of their panel and the words and actions of government officials outside the talks, the GRP merely entered the third round of negotiations to put up a pretense be-

fore Arroyo's inauguration as president and conjure the illusion that it was still interested in the peace talks.

Macapagal-Arroyo is so full of herself and brazenly wants to impress on everyone that she has no need for the peace negotiations with the revolutionary movement, says Sison. He warned that if the GRP does not take serious steps to implement the agreements reached in the third round of formal talks, relations between the two sides may deter-

riorate.

The GRP has declared that its refusal to undertake any move to have the CPP, NPA and Sison removed from the US "terrorist" listing was non-negotiable. Only 10 political prisoners out of the 32 whose release the GRP has promised have been freed. This is from a total of 300 political detainees. Nothing has likewise come out of Arroyo's pledge to facilitate the indemnification of victims of the Marcos dictatorship.

AB

tion by US imperialism of Philippine economic, political and military affairs. It is no secret that eliminating restrictions on setting up foreign military bases, bringing in foreign troops without the benefit of a treaty, and bringing in nuclear arms are on the US agenda. The US also wants to remove remaining provisions against foreign ownership of land and 100% ownership of enterprises, and take away the power of the courts to rule on economic matters.

It is also the objective of the US and its local minions to wipe out the formal civil rights of the Filipino people, have the US' "anti-terrorism" doctrine written into the Philippine constitution and pave the way for fascist laws and orders such as the National ID system, the better to suppress the people.

It may be recalled that during the campaign period, Arroyo promised that if she wins the presidency, she will step down in 2007 to pave the way for a parliamentary system of government. She merely wanted to mask how power-hungry she was and elicit the voters' sympathy. But just hours after she was sworn in on June 30, she reneged on this promise.

Arroyo had just finished ironing out the "legality" of her new term when she immediately laid out plans on how to extend her rule through other means. She has also intimidated her willingness to serve both as president and prime minister, just like the dictator Marcos in 1978. But she has only succeeded in infuriating the people and stoking the flames of intense infighting among ruling cliques.

Progressive parties and democratic mass organizations are leading the people's movement against "chacha." They correctly believe that "chacha" only serves the interests of foreign capital and the ruling classes and would only bring further suffering and oppression to the Filipino people.

They are also correct in emphasizing the necessity of confronting first and foremost the urgent issue of the worsening economic crisis, intensifying poverty and other problems faced by the country and Filipino people as a result of among others, the successive increases in the prices of basic goods and services, the continuing decline of real wages and earnings, continuing militarization and violations of human rights and the suppression of freedom of expression. AB

Lessons of the NPA's military campaign in Panay

Mass support was the key to the NPA's successful assault on the Tubungan, Iloilo municipal hall and police station on June 15. According to Julian Paisano, spokesperson of the Coronacion "Waling-Waling" Chiva Command of the NPA in Panay, the broad masses of peasants and other sectors supported the Red fighters during the entire process of preparing for the tactical offensive. During the operation itself, they concealed the advancing people's army as it neared its target. They rendered the enemy deaf and blind, thus ensuring the raid's success.

Precision, organization, discipline. Many were amazed at the precision, organization and discipline of the NPA in disarming the police, in ensuring that no civilian would get hurt, and in effecting the orderly retreat of its forces. The operation was concluded swiftly within a span of 35 minutes, with the retreating Red fighters carting off the firearms, ammunition and other military equipment they had seized. It took several more hours before enemy reinforcements could move in because of their great fear of being ambushed by NPA units.

It was around 1 p.m. when the NPA entered the municipality. Blocking forces immediately took control of the three routes in and out of the town square. The policemen, municipal employees and CVO elements attending a seminar all thought that Philippine Army troops had arrived.

The policemen, who were intently watching on television the close counting of votes for president and vice-president and news on destabilization threats, had no inkling of what was going on. They were caught by surprise when the Red fighters showed up to disarm them. Squad "Abe" was able to control the staff house (which also served as the guard house where the firearms and base radio were located), while Squad "Kaloy" simultaneously controlled the front, first and second storeys of the municipal hall. The policemen and the municipal employees were made to lie face down. At the same time, Squad "Baking" assaulted and immediately took control of the police station.

The NPA's original plan was to carry out the operation without having to fire a single shot. But

when the police chief chose to entrench himself in his office and fire his M16, the NPA was forced to return fire. While exchanging fire, the NPA and the other policemen called on the police chief to surrender and assured him that he would not be harmed. The exchange of fire lasted half an hour. Towards the end, the chief was able to reach the second storey and use the civilians as human shields. Under these conditions, the NPA command decided to order a retreat to avoid civilian casualties. The NPA medic administered first aid to an employee who was hurt because of broken glass. All in all, the tactical offensive lasted an hour from the time it was launched, to the assault, disarming of the enemy and retreat of all the NPA forces.

NPA regulations. The Red fighters effectively showed the policemen and municipal employees who were held captive their high level of discipline and firm compliance with the revolutionary movement's policies and the Geneva conventions and protocols with respect to human rights and the humane treatment of hors de combat. While the disarmed policemen were being tied up, the NPA told them that they were only after their weapons.

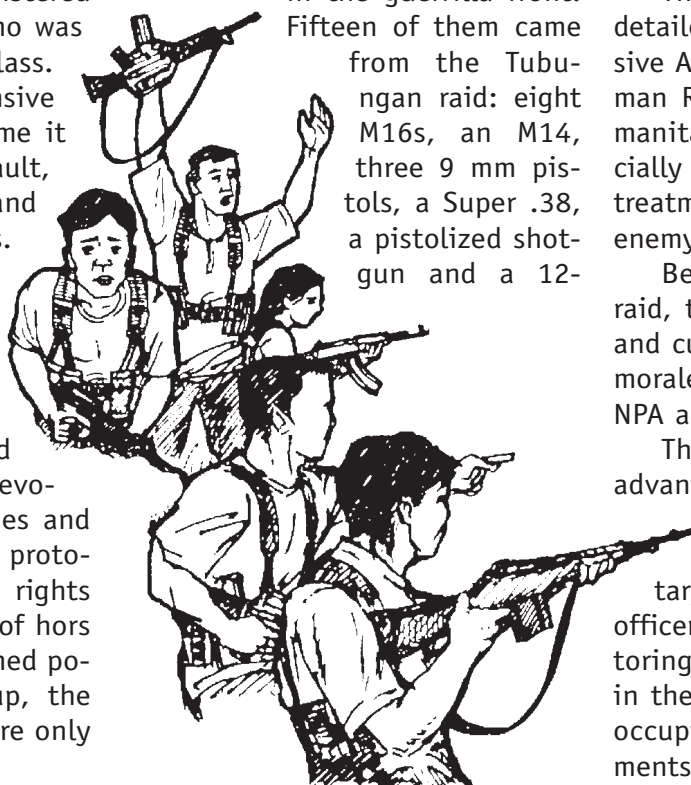
The Red fighters also distributed several copies of *Ang Bayan* and leaflets from the Napoleon Tugmagtang Command (the NPA command in the guerrilla front where the raid was executed) to the policemen and employees, all the while explaining about advancing the people's revolutionary aspirations. They planted two Communist Party flags in front of the Tubungan municipal hall before retreating. The entire process, from the assault to the retreat was also photographed and document-

ed on film and audio tape.

Prior to this, the NPA raided the E.C. de Luna Construction in Barangay Partition, Guimbal, Iloilo. An undersized NPA platoon assaulted the company compound at around 10 p.m. on the night of the election. The company was meted punishment for its failure to pay revolutionary taxes. Two shotguns were also confiscated from the company guards.

Military hardware seized. The NPA confiscated 17 firearms from the two-month military campaign in the guerrilla front.

Fifteen of them came from the Tubungan raid: eight M16s, an M14, three 9 mm pistols, a Super .38, a pistolized shotgun and a 12-



gauge shotgun. Various magazines, bullets, three rifle grenades, a base radio, two VHF handsets and other military equipment were also seized. Meanwhile, a shotgun and a .38 revolver were confiscated from De Luna Construction.

Lessons. Aside from the effective use of superior force and the element of surprise, an important part of the preparations for the Tubungan assault was the series of trainings that the officers and fighters who joined the raid under-

went. They went through the Basic Politico-Military Course (BPMC), with the military cadres and officers also attending an intelligence and operations study conference. Before launching the military campaign, they practiced map-reading, launched dry runs and watched videos on tactics and techniques in raids. For the Red fighters, the raid on the E.C. de Luna Construction served as a dry run for the even bigger and more successful assault on the Tubungan Police Station.

The Red fighters also made a detailed study of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), especially on the issue of the proper treatment of civilians and captured enemy combatants.

Before and after the Tubungan raid, the NPA launched a political and cultural campaign to raise the morale and fighting spirit of the NPA and the masses in the area.

The NPA also effectively took advantage of the infighting among reactionary politicians and their cronies in the military and police. AFP and PNP officers and units were busy monitoring the destabilization threats in the cities and capitals and preoccupied with their role as instruments of their respective favored politicians in scheming against rival candidates.

Above all, the key to the victory of the recently concluded military campaign was the strong and widespread support of the masses for the revolutionary armed struggle. The peasant masses and other folk tirelessly attended to and ensured the security of the large number of NPA forces that had gathered for the long period of training and study from April until the tactical offensives were actually launched.

AB

Agrarian revolution advances in Central Luzon

The peasant masses in Central Luzon have achieved considerable victories in advancing antifeudal struggles.

In Nueva Ecija, in particular, the various campaigns to reduce land rent, fight usury, raise the wages of farm workers, reduce rent for farming equipment, and raise the farmgate prices of tomatoes, rice and other products, have begun to acquire a province-wide character.

More than 4,000 farm workers in 13 barrios of three towns benefited from these campaigns.

The agrarian struggles are most vigorous in a cluster of six towns in the province. In one of these towns, eight peasants occupied nine hectares of land. For years, the revolutionary movement ceased to exist in the area and agrarian struggles ground to a halt. When the mass organizations were revived, however, revolutionary work, especially antifeudal struggles once more gained momentum. Usurious lending rates were reduced by over 50% after the peasants launched a struggle against the local merchant-usurer who used to impose around 30% monthly interest. Three adjoining barrios mobilized for this struggle.

Tractor rentals were also reduced from ₱2,000-₱2,200 down to ₱1,800 per hectare. Seventy peasants tilling up to 70 hectares of farmland benefited in November 2003.

In two more towns in this cluster, 3,150 farm workers enjoyed wage increases. From ₱1,200 per hectare for a 15-man planting team (14 farm workers and a foreman),

wages were raised to ₱1,400-1,500 per hectare in eight barrios. Farm

workers working in at least 2,000 hectares of farmland benefited from the wage increases.

Some 100 members of the Pam-bansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM) collectively set up a broad irrigation ditch in one village, providing water for up to 100 hectares of farmland.

In Nueva Ecija and other areas of Central Luzon, anti-militarization struggles go hand in hand with agrarian struggles. Because the reactionary military defends landlords and other exploiting classes, the peasant masses simultaneously wage mass actions to oppose the violence and havoc wrought by the AFP at the onset, in the middle and during the concluding stages of antifeudal struggles.

Other provinces. In Bulacan, peasants advanced the struggle to reduce transport costs for string beans, increase the price of charcoal, occupy abandoned lands and oppose evictions by landlords. They have also organized peasants to launch *pangangapa* (the local term for the practice of catching fish or shrimp with bare hands), raise the wages of fishpond caretakers from ₱3,000 to ₱4,500, and wages for laborers who construct small dikes and embankments for fishponds from ₱120 to ₱150.

In Pampanga, Aeta slash-and-burn farmers launched struggles to



raise the prices of their products. There is likewise an ongoing campaign to cultivate rice in upland areas.

In one village, peasants succeeded in retaining their right to stay in land that they had long been occupying, even if a high-end subdivision had already been set up on part of the land. Meanwhile, there is a continuing campaign to rehabilitate land buried in lahar as a result of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991. From the previous 80 hectares, up to 200 hectares have now been cleared of sand and being readied for tilling. A number of villages have also been waging a struggle against sand quarrying which has dried up water sources for farming.

In Tarlac, a number of tenants have succeeded in raising their share of the harvest from 50% to 75%, aside from having their other demands met. Peasants also took over the lands of an absentee landlord. Another group of 100 peasants occupied a piece of abandoned land. Farmers also refused to pay for a piece of residential land that a landlord had merely grabbed from its owner. Peasants also successfully resisted the seizure of a *pisqueria* or communal fishery.

Fifty-six families in Zambales staged an organized reoccupation of 480 hectares of land seized by

the landlords from the masses. Farmers continue to employ *bayanihan* (mutual aid) to expand clearings in order to raise production and improve the masses' livelihood. Poor peasants successfully negotiated with small landlords against an attempt to close down an access road leading to their farms. A group of farmers occupied four hectares of an absentee landlords' land, transforming it into a communal farm tilled by 22 peasants. Another group of peasants also occupied lands owned by two landlords.

In Bataan, Aetas waged a successful struggle to raise the prices of their products. In several areas, the propagation and dispersal of upland rice seeds and taro for planting has been initiated. Peasants set up an irrigation system by constructing a small dam in order to bring water to upland farms. Another group of 15 farmers thwarted attempts to evict them from their occupied lands.

In Aurora, agrarian revolution is being launched by employing *suyuan* (labor exchange) in clearing, carrying out communal farming, and occupying abandoned lands. Three-hundred peasant families have benefited from this undertaking.

These are just initial victories. The revolutionary movement in Central Luzon continues to expand the scope of agrarian revolution throughout the region to address the problems and aspirations of the peasant masses and transform them into solid bastions of the revolution. **AB**

This summary of antifeudal campaigns was sourced from reports published by Himagsik, the revolutionary mass paper in Central Luzon.

Ka Argie: Guerrilla medic, dentist and surgeon



The New People's Army now counts hundreds of medics, dentists and surgeons among its ranks as a result of its efforts to systematize trainings in medical work. These medical workers' talent and skills would amaze even university-educated medical professionals and veteran doctors. The accumulated experience of Red medics is a rich trove of medical and scientific knowledge that directly serves the revolutionary forces and the people.

Ka Argie is one such medic

At 35, Ka Argie already has a wealth of experience as a fighter, medic and surgeon. Hailing from the peasantry, he began as a youth activist in 1982 in their barrio in Cagayan Valley.

Not long afterward, he decided to join the NPA. Although he had no knowledge whatsoever of medical work, he was chosen to become the medic of his unit.

Amid political and military trainings, Ka Argie underwent thorough training in medical work under one of his comrades in the unit.

Since then, Ka Argie has served as Medical Officer of the various NPA units he has been assigned to. It was during the years of premature regularization and intense armed fighting between the NPA and AFP that Ka Argie honed his skills as a surgeon, especially in treating gunshot wounds.

When the rectification movement was launched and the NPA resumed devoting the appropriate amount of time and attention to organizing the masses, Ka Argie was able to develop other aspects of his medical work. In the mass work unit he belongs to, part of his daily task involves giving check-ups to barriofolk and prompt medical attention to persons found to be suffering

from ailments. Providing such medical services to the masses is one of the NPA's urgent tasks as a genuine people's army.

In over two decades as a Red fighter and doctor, Ka Argie's knowledge and skills in the medical field have grown even broader.

He has also learned to clean, extract teeth and make dentures.

He now knows how to conduct urine and blood analysis and undertake refraction to make lenses for glasses.

Aside from his rich experience in operating on gunshot wounds, Ka Argie has also operated on hernias and cysts. He has also performed amputations.

Ka Argie has likewise repaired a patient's broken bone by using a stainless steel brace. Aside from applying plaster casts on fractured bones, he also also done bone and skin grafting and has performed eye operations (installing an artificial eye, in particular).

The continuous development of Ka Argie's knowledge and training proves the degree of attention and importance the NPA attaches to medical work.

"Medical work is part of the NPA's mass work," says Ka Argie. It is geared not only towards addressing the NPA's combat needs but to establishing and consolidating the mass base, he adds.

"Even if the NPA has not yet achieved a high degree of specialization in the medical field," said Ka Argie, "the people's net gain is enormous and extensive." With the help of the NPA's medical work, its expanded and consolidated mass base serves as the foundation for the development of medical training both within the people's army and among the people. AB

The educational system under the Arroyo regime

Gloria Arroyo never made the education of the youth a priority during her three-year term. Instead of having government shoulder the responsibility of improving the educational system, the regime has included the systematic neglect of education in its program. Such neglect is in accordance with IMF and World Bank dictates calling for the regime to turn its back on social services to enable government to allocate its budget for debt payments.

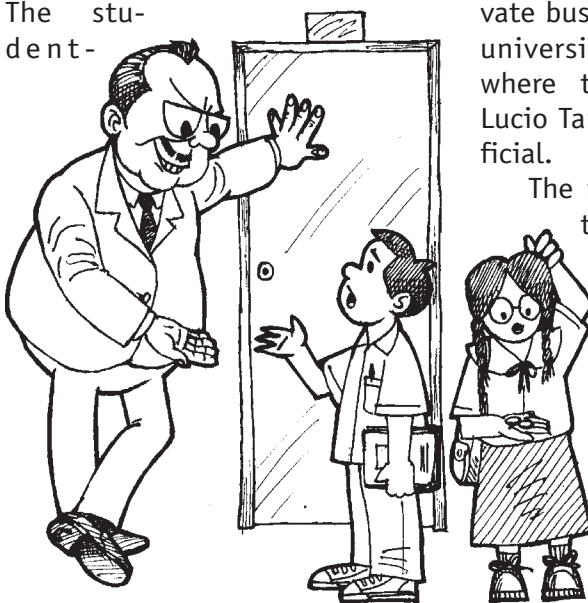
Only P130 billion has been allocated for education in this year's national budget, compared to the P541 billion devoted to service the country's debt. This amount is extremely inadequate to provide for students' needs. Thus, public school students and teachers still suffer from a shortage of facilities, supplies and personnel. No less than the Department of Education has admitted to a lack of 39,383 classrooms, 4,125,413 desks, 9.88 million books and 49,212 teachers when school opened in June.

The student-

teacher ratio remains at 60:1. A government survey of 400,000 teachers revealed that 55% of schools lack electricity, 84% do not have any water supply, and 38% do not have toilets. Twenty-five percent of the teachers surveyed said that their classrooms did not have ceilings. Due to the teacher shortage, many of them handle subjects they were not trained for. These shortages grow more acute as more and more children reach school age yearly.

As in private schools, tuition fees and other expenses in public colleges and universities have been on the rise. It has become customary not to report these increases to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). School administrators invoke the fact that government encourages increases in the cost of services that are supposed to be provided for free. Besides, aside from the increase in costs, the government also encourages the commercialization of education through the sale of school property (such as land) and joint ventures with private businesses. One example is a university in Northern Luzon where the comprador-bourgeois Lucio Tan is an administration official.

The regime does not stand in the way of annual increases in tuition fees and other private school expenses. This school opening, partial reports submitted to CHED indicate that as many as 214 private colleges and universities have already increased tuition fees by 11.39% or



P313.24 per unit.

CHED's claim that the 214 represent only 16% of the total number of the country's private colleges and universities is deceptive. The truth is that many schools have not yet reported increases in tuition fees, including those in the Ilocos Region, CAR, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and Bicol.

CHED also fails to mention that many more schools have increased miscellaneous fees instead of tuition fees. So many schools employ all sorts of trickery to come up with the array of fees to pay. Students receive no explanation about fees that refer to the same items. Some examples are the sports fee, athlet-

ic fee and UAAP fee; and the energy fee, power-rate fee and aircon fee. There are other fees that are

similarly ludicrous such as the development fee, parking fee, copier fee, and the late enrolment fee, among others.

In many cases, the cumulative amount of all these fees is even bigger than the amount paid for tuition. Schools are not obliged to report these fee increases to CHED.

If children and youth are able to go to school at all, their families are hard-pressed meeting expenses for transportation, pocket money and school supplies. The regime has not yet granted the P125 (now P155) wage increase that workers have been demanding for years and the P3,000 salary increase that government employees have also been clamoring for. Shrinking real wages and salaries, along with the crushing burden of oil price hikes and higher fees for electricity and other needs, further deprive the youth of their right to education.

One reports shows that 1.7 million children between the ages of 7 and 12 are not in school. Out of eight million youth who ought to be in college, only 2.3 million are actually in school. An Ateneo de Manila University study shows that for every 100 students, only 66 will get to finish elementary school, 42 will get to graduate from high school and only 14 will eventually finish college.

Funds for fascists

The regime utterly deprives the youth of their right to free education. Teachers are likewise made to suffer extremely low salaries. Meanwhile, the regime goes all out to give whatever the AFP and the PNP demand. Following are some of the funds allocated to the AFP and PNP in 2003:

- ▶ P3 billion for salary increases of AFP elements
- ▶ P2.1 billion for salary increases of police personnel
- ▶ P1.4 billion for the CAGU
- ▶ P1.2 billion for new policemen, jail guards and firefighters
- ▶ P1.1 billion for the pensions of retired military personnel
- ▶ P800 million for new mercenary soldiers
- ▶ P96.3 million for the Balikatan exercises

Arroyo's showcase projects

The regime boasts of two of its programs in education. These showcase programs were launched in the closing months of Arroyo's term with the sordid aim of garnering the votes of the students and their parents. The "Iskolar sa Bawat Mahirap na Pamilya" (A Scholar in Every Poor Family) program was launched just this April. The "Student Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic (SAFE 4 SR)," meanwhile, was launched only in early 2004. These two programs were designed for college students of voting age, especially SAFE 4 SR which is geared towards college students in their junior and senior years.

The "Iskolar sa Bawat Mahirap na Pamilya," would supposedly grant two-year scholarships to five million students in any public college or university, or for a two-year technical or vocational course. SAFE 4 SR, meanwhile, is a "study now-pay later" plan which would lend funds to students in their junior or senior year to pay for their education and enable them to finish their course.

Arroyo's programs favor capitalist owners of private schools, because they ensure that student beneficiaries would still be able to pay their tuition fees despite higher costs. But aside from the few students who stand to benefit from these programs, there are thousands more who would be forced to stop schooling because of the burden of rising fees.

The big question is where Arroyo intends to source the billions of pesos needed to defray the costs of these ambitious programs, considering the government's enormous budget deficit. Many believe that this is all a grand deception designed not merely to secure the student vote but to douse cold water on the students' seething anger over the Arroyo government's grave neglect of their welfare. The programs are actually pointless because first and foremost, education should be free for all students.

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US installs puppet government in Iraq

On June 28, the US installed an Iraqi puppet government in a ceremony in Baghdad, and formally dissolved the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the colonial administration that governed Iraq for 14 months. Iyad Allawi, an operative of both the CIA and the UK's MI-6 even when he was still a member of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party, was appointed prime minister.

The US continues to exercise its colonial power over Iraq. Even as it installed Allawi as prime minister, it continues to actively recruit and train the puppet army which will serve as the mainstay of US neo-colonial power in Iraq. The US intends to continue to control Iraq's

political, military and economic affairs, appropriate its oil and use the country as a base in its bid to dominate the entire Middle East.

As the US seeks to consolidate its neocolonial rule in Iraq, it is in its best interests to maintain occupation troops in the country. Before leaving, CPA Administrator Paul Bremer saw to it that the puppet government could not force out the 146,000 US troops in Iraq. Although the puppet government is already in place, the US Embassy in Baghdad will continue to serve as the center of colonial governance. Newly appointed US Ambassador to Iraq John Negroponte will continue the role previously held by Paul Bremer. Towards this end, the US will assign up to 3,000 personnel who will involve themselves in the puppet government's various activities, ensure the privatization of the Iraqi economy, and carry out economic reforms that would further tighten the grip of American companies in the country.

The US' principal objective is to control Iraq's oil resources and profits. At the same time, the US will maintain its control of all business privileges and contracts granted to the Bush government's favored cronies ostensibly for the reconstruction of facilities destroyed by the US war and the supply of US military equipment to Iraq. The US will see to it that the new puppet regime will not be able

to change any of this. Laws have already been enacted regarding corporate operations, which include an outright ban on strikes.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi people continue to intensify their armed resistance and expand the united front of revolutionaries and rebel forces that is rocking US rule in Iraq. They continue to rise up despite the relentless massacres, bombings and destruction, and the most intense oppression of the Iraqi people perpetrated by US forces. They are determined to wage resistance to punish the occupation forces and traitors and deprive them of the opportunity to take Iraq.

They attack military and police forces, facilities and logistics, US security contractors and government bureaucrats, the US' allies in its occupation of Iraq and the Iraqi puppet government. The growing number of casualties sustained by the US strengthens the call both within and outside the US for a complete withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. As the crisis of US rule in Iraq continues to worsen, it becomes more favorable for the Iraqi people and the armed revolutionary forces to deal blows on both the US forces and its as yet feeble puppet government. The American troops who now need to be confined to their camps have become easier targets for the armed Iraqi forces.

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NDF-Northern Mindanao honors two NPA martyrs

THE National Democratic Front in Northern Mindanao paid tribute to Pulang Diwata Command spokesperson Ka Geril Manggubat, and Ka Johnny, a Red fighter, on June 21. The two fighters were slain after a

successful raid on a PNP station in Bayugan, Agusan del Sur on June 19. PNP reinforcements caught up with them while they were retreating from the place of battle. Their lives serve as an inspiration for the

further intensification of armed struggle in the region.

The Red Alimaong Platoon seized seven M16s, five M14s and ammunition from the raid. Two PNP troops were also killed.

New cases of media repression exposed

REPRESSION of the freedom of expression is intensifying in the country. Only a few weeks after Bombo Radyo-Isabela was allowed to resume broadcasts, another radio program was forced off the air by the military and police.

On June 23, Radyo Anakpawis, a weekly program of the Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan broadcast over radio station DZRB in Batangas City, was forced off the air. Alleging that the program was being maintained by the New People's Army, the AFP ordered its closure and a stop to criticisms of the Arroyo government.

DZRB manager Danny Debolgado and Bayan Muna-Southern Tagalog chair Orly Marcellana who anchors

the program, objected to the suppression. Marcellana is the widow of slain human rights advocate Eden Marcellana. The program has continued broadcasting despite threats by the military and the police of a raid on the station.

In Mindanao, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN)-Socsargen Chapter strongly denounced the murder of commentator and dzRH-Radyo Natin manager Ely Binoya. Binoya was killed in Sarangani province on June 17. Two weeks before he was murdered in Barangay Batomelang, Binoya was mauled by relatives of Mayor Teodoro Padernilla of Malungon. Binoya is 15th on the list of journalists who have been murdered since 2001 in the course of practicing their profession.

US, AFP to conduct 6 military exercises starting July

AFP and American troops will begin its series of "joint exercises" for 2004 in Carmen, North Cotabato on July 26. The exercises will last till August 14.

The US specifically chose Cotabato because of the heavy presence of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) forces in the province. The US has accused the MILF of collaborating with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which it considers a terrorist group. As in previous exercises, the US and the AFP are using the presence of so-called regional terrorists as a pretext to conceal the US' armed intervention in Philippine affairs.

Five more exercises are slated

for the rest of the year.

(1) Fusion 04-2, which will be held from the second to the third week of July, according to the AFP Information Office. The US Navy, the Joint Interagency Task Force West, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Philippine Navy and Coast Guard will be joining the training against narcotics and on counter-terrorism. It will be held in Subic Bay, Zambales, and in the Southern Command's area of responsibility in Western Mindanao.

(2) Balance Piston, which involves training the light infantry battalion at the 6th ID Training Unit in Carmen, Cotabato City from the last week of July to the last

week of August. One-hundred and fifty American troops and AFP Special Forces will be joining Balance Piston.

(3) CARAT or the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, involving elements of the US and Philippine Navies, to be held also in July.

(4) US-RP Maritime Surveillance Exercises (Marsurvex) which starts with the training of 100 personnel in the use of air and sea craft in the first week of August.

(5) Palah exercises, which will be held in the last quarter of the year for elements of the US Navy and the Philippine Navy Special Warfare Group.